



# BRIDGING THE PAST



More on page 4



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## Hello From The Editor

Hello and welcome to a very late February edition of the Western Park Gazette.

In this issue The Soar Lane river bridge, in the Fosse, gets a £400K makeover, Tommy Coombes from the Metal Monocle on Braunstone Gate gets to meet a Hollywood icon, Helen Knott takes a serious look at the rise in young male unemployment and what can be done about it, we have the latest policing update and they've been busy over the last month or so; the drone's been out, cannabis farms raided and Operation Peddlefast confiscates over 60 e-bikes and scooters. Carey Tunstall has advice on how to keep plants safe during heavy rain and as we've tweaked our distribution area to include more of the Braunstone and Rowley Fields ward, we're including a little bit about the history of Braunstone Park.

And why not keep the little grey cells occupied with the even crosser word and sudoku on the back page? Thanks again to all who contribute and support us.

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# Events Diary

Hall @ St Anne's, Letchworth Rd: Knit & Natter: 1.30pm, 4th Tues. Weds Club: 2.30pm, 1st Weds. Pram Club: Weds 9.15-11.30am. Women's Taekwondo: Thurs 8-9pm taekwondo4all.com Fri Coffee: 10am.

**Fat Thursday (Tłusty Czwartek):** 12 Feb, 3-5pm. St Anne's Hall. Free Entry & Polish Cakes!

**Musical Memory Box:** 1st & 3rd Tues 2pm. The Grove, Braunstone.

**Free Tea/Coffee** @ St Paul's Worship Ctr / Community Hub, Kirby Rd Weds, 2-4pm. **T-Top sale** 2nd Sat.

**Drop-in Talk:** @ St Paul's Worship Ctr. Talk to local police & support orgs. 1st Tue monthly 10-12 noon.

**Wonderful Walks on Western Park:** Monthly 3rd Sunday. 9.30am start at Hinckley Rd gates.

@ **Metal Monocle:** Fleisch, Gestalt, Velocette 13 March. Wild Daisy & The Black Hearts 14 March.

@ **The International:** Hellbent Forever, Counterfeit Kiss 14 March. Kossoff The Band Plays On 18 Mar.

@ **De Mont Hall:** Dead Ringers 11 March. Elkie Brooks 13 March. Jason Donovan 18 March.

@ **Curve:** Lightning Thief - Percy Jackson Musical: 17-21 Mar. Beatles Tribute 22 Mar. Mama Mia 24-29 Mar.

@ **Y Theatre:** Matt Forde 19 Mar. Gaurav Gupta 20 Mar. Britpop Show 21 Mar. Danny Baker 28 Mar.

@ **Little Theatre:** The Mirror Crack'd: 16-21 Mar. West End Magic 1 Apr. Paul McCartney Trib: 3 April.

@ **02 Academy:** The Snuts, 14 Mar. Natzel 27 Mar. Guns 2 Roses + AC/DC Reborn 4 Apr.

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# BRIDGING THE PAST

**A three-month maintenance programme has started on an historic landmark in West Leicester.**

Leicester City Council contractors are repairing and renovating the Soar Lane river bridge in Leicester's Waterside to the tune of £400,000 paid for by the Government's Local Transport Fund.

The Victorian bridge, which provides an important link for pedestrians and cyclists between the Waterside regeneration area, Rally Park and nearby schools, is recognised as an important local heritage asset.

The extensive work to repair and restore the bridge will involve replacing sections of worn parapets, applying a new waterproofing system to the bridge deck and reconstructing the cobbled surface of the carriageway.

Footpaths are also being resurfaced, and the decorative steelwork repainted.

Work is expected to be finished in April but access will still be maintained for pedestrians and cyclists for the duration of the work.



The bridge is not used by general traffic, so there will be no impact on motorists.

Leicester City Council's director of highways Martin Fletcher said: "Wear and tear mean the condition of this historic bridge is such that repair work is now required, and the bridge will need to close for a few weeks while that is carried out.

"This essential work will restore an important part of our local transport heritage and ensure this well-used bridge remains safe for many years to come."

The Soar Lane river bridge was built in the late 1870s and originally provided connections to the Soar Lane Flour Mills, which were located on the island between the parallel watercourses of the River Soar and Grand Union Canal.



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# FROM MONOCLE TO MAMOA

When Tommy Coombes opened the Metal Monocle, Leicester's first steampunk rock bar, on Braunstone Gate in 2019, little did he know that he would end up rubbing shoulders with Jason Mamoa, one of Hollywood's biggest stars.

For those who don't know what the steampunk genre is, it combines elements of Victoriana, bizarre steam driven machinery and sci-fi fantasy.

Think of a man wearing a top hat, knee length leather breeches and riding a steam-driven half horse, half shark made of metal while firing a laser gun at an orc built of cogs and you'll get the general idea.

Sitting upstairs in the Monocle with Tommy, while his three legged terrier chews on his beard and barks at passers by; the big question is - How does the owner of a rock bar in Leicester get to meet Aquaman?

Tommy says: "We'd organised a brandy tasting session, for Spirits of Anarchy,



last November and Faheem, our supplier, turned up. He really likes the bar and invited us to a big trade show in Birmingham which was the launch of Jason Mamoa's Meili vodka.

"Jason's a bit of a metalhead and most people were normally dressed; me and the family weren't, we were all denim and T-shirt! We stood out!

"Then, We got put on the guest list for the evening launch and ended up in the VIP section.

"Jason came in; he recognised us from earlier and we got called over and got talking and showed him pictures of the bar which he really liked the look of.

"It was a fantastic evening, brilliant meeting him, good bloke - and he really knows his vodka!"

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## BRICKING IT WITH LEGO

On 21-22 March, rockets won't be the only big builds at the National Space Centre.

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# KN&TT'S LANDING

**Unemployment is surging among young men according to the latest statistics. I'm not sure this is a labour market story but it is a meaning story.**

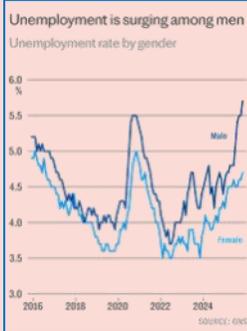
When women lose jobs, they talk about finances, logistics, childcare, next steps. When men lose jobs, they often talk about themselves, because for a lot of men work is identity, routine, belonging, self-worth, social life, structure and purpose.

Society has (rightly) spent years helping women expand opportunity, but we've never really replaced what men used to be.

We removed the old roles and never built new ones. Now many men, especially younger ones, don't know where they fit.

It's a wellbeing issue because unemployment stats often become mental health, loneliness or addiction statistics. And eventually family statistics.

People don't just need jobs; they need purpose.



Young men drift because there are no structures to guide them. No scaffolds for them to climb. There is a strong argument at the minute for anyone who is NEET (not in education, employment or training) to be doing some kind of national service.

Successive governments created a system where university education was seen as essential to get a good paying job. Girls and women's statistically do better in education. The kind of jobs that were being created are mostly service sector jobs which are traditionally female leaning. AI is going to wipe out huge numbers of entry-level jobs within the next five years. And yet the previous government made it almost impossible for kids to get apprenticeships or provide technical qualifications. They pushed the academic model of education. That needs to change. The jobs that initially aren't going to go are jobs AI struggles with like care, medicine, education, non-repetitive physical tasks like some jobs in the building industry.

Men need to recognise this and organise and move boys in those directions. Reducing all the friction to success along the way. Men need to learn to talk to each other and make spaces to do that.

Men need to advocate for different education models and support them when they come. Men need to help young boys and men and not leave it to women and the female centric education system.

If you got this far, well done!

HK

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No surgeries BH weekends, Easter or Xmas.

**Western Ward: George Cole, Vi Dempster, Molly O'Neill. T: 07891 232 672, 07976 348 325 & 07742 766 462.**

New Parks Library, 321 Aikman Ave, LE3 9PW First Saturday of each month 11.00am – 12 noon

**Westcotes Ward: Cllrs Adam Clarke & Sarah Russell. T: 0116 454 0034 & 07814 532 928**

Surgery: Westcotes Library, Narborough Road, LE3 0BQ, 2nd Sat of each month, 11.00am – 12.00 noon

**Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields Ward: Cllrs Susan Barton, Elaine Halford, Kulwinder Singh Johal.**

**Cllr Singh Johal Surgery:** Contact by phone or email to make appointment. T: 07736 194 824.

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# BRAUNSTONE PARK

The Western Park Gazette's distribution area now includes more of the Braunstone and Rowley Fields ward, edging up to Braunstone Park.

So we thought we'd take a dive into the history of one of the city's largest public open spaces.

The 168-acre Braunstone Park, locally famous for its immense stretches of greenery and amenities including gardens, football pitches, outdoor gym, trails, skate park and two lakes, has a history stretching back to at least the 11th century.

The area was first recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book as Brantestone, a tiny settlement of just eight households. It was part of "Barnho Wood" within the Leicester Forest, governed by forest laws that granted early tenants hunting and pasture rights.

The Winstanley family bought the land in 1650, but Clement Winstanley didn't build Braunstone Hall until 1775 including a stable block a year later and walled kitchen garden for exotic fruits in 1792.



The stable block is now a museum and visitors centre run by the Braunstone History Group.

The estate, stayed in the Winstanley family for 150 years but by 1925, Leicester Corporation compulsorily purchased most of it to build housing for the city's ever expanding population and the hall eventually became a school in 1932.

During World War Two, the park was repurposed for the war effort, growing crops and grazing sheep.

At one point a bomb hit the park during a night time air raid and Hinckley Road was strafed damaging property and shops as far down as the parade. Importantly, the park also served as the HQ for the US 82nd Airborne Division before D-Day. Airman lived in Nissen huts, which were later used to house bombed-out Leicester citizens. A memorial to the 82nd can be found in the walled garden.

After the school closed in 1996, the hall fell into disrepair and became a target of constant vandalism until it was restored and reopened as Winstanley House in 2017, one of the city's most popular luxury hotel and wedding venues.

Braunstone Park is near to one of the most important wildlife corridors through Leicester and is close to other wildlife sites such as Western Park and Rancliffe Gardens. Together, these sites and others form a very important local resource for nature conservation, linked by a railway corridor which allows wildlife to travel easily along its length.



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# CAREY'S COMPOST CORNER



**A waterlogged garden can be a common problem especially after the recent long spells of winter rain.** Heavy clay soils, compacted ground and poor drainage all make it hard for water to escape, leaving our lawns squelchy, borders flooded and plants struggling for air around their roots. The good news is that with a mix of patience and practical fixes, most gardens can be brought back into balance.

Improving soil structure is one of the best long-term solutions. In borders, digging in generous amounts of organic matter such as well-rotted compost, leaf mould or manure helps to open up the soil and improve drainage while also boosting fertility. This is best done when the soil is moist rather than soaking wet or bone dry, usually in spring or autumn. Over time, healthier soil drains better and copes more easily with heavy rain.

The Lawn will often show waterlogging first, with puddles forming and grass turning yellow or patchy.



Aeration can make a big difference. Using a garden fork or a hollow-tine aerator to create holes allows water to drain away and air to reach the roots. Brushing sharp sand or a sandy topdressing into the holes can help keep them open, particularly on heavy soils.

Choosing the right plants can also make a noticeable difference. If parts of your garden are consistently wet, it may be easier to work with those conditions rather than fight them. Many plants, including certain irises, dogwoods, willows and moisture-loving grasses, thrive in damp soil and can turn a problem area into an attractive feature. For veg gardens, raised beds are a particularly effective solution, lifting roots above the worst of the waterlogging and warming up more quickly in spring.

In severe cases, installing proper drainage may be the best option. French drains, which are trenches filled with gravel and sometimes a perforated pipe, can channel excess water away from problem areas. While this is more work and expense, it can be a permanent fix for gardens that regularly flood and never seem to dry out.

Waterlogged gardens are frustrating, but they're rarely hopeless. By protecting wet soil, improving its structure and adapting planting choices to suit the conditions, you can gradually transform a soggy plot into a healthier, more resilient garden that copes far better with our unpredictable weather. Happy gardening!

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## Feb Police Update

**A 36-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of being concerned with the supply of cannabis after police discovered a grow in a house on Woodville Road.**

Police attended the address on 1st of February. Acting on information received, the police drone team were deployed and the area searched.

On 7th February, two men were charged and remanded after police seized a £365,000 cannabis farm (More than 500 plants) and growing equipment following a raid on a house on Sybil Road, off Narborough Road.

Officers worked tirelessly on the investigative and community reassurance side of the job and were back the following morning to help with the clear-up.

These positive results are only possible with the help of the community. Information provided helps identify suspicious behaviour, target organised crime groups, and keeps neighbourhoods safer.

Operation Peddlefast rode into Rally Park, early in February, to tackle the menace of illegal e-bikes and scooters. The Fosse beat team and partners scored success after success over a 90-minute period. This was in direct response to Fosse residents saying the illegal use of these machines was a major priority.

Within an hour and half on the park police seized ten e-bikes and scooters, some of which were being ridden at excessive speeds.

During the operation, two males in balaclavas tried their luck avoiding officers. One male was found with cannabis, which was seized and he'll be dealt with in due course. The second male was found in possession of cannabis and was arrested for possession with intent to supply, as well as other offences.

A follow up search at the arrested male's home uncovered more cannabis, cocaine, a large quantity of cash and two large machetes.

Since August last year, proactive enforcement from Braunstone and Rowley Fields officers have resulted in the seizure of 51 e-scooters and 40 e-bikes, alongside the recovery of a stolen motorbike and stolen bicycle. Several arrests have also been made for a range of additional offences identified during these operations.

Across the beat, 11 Misuse of Drugs Act warrants have been executed this year resulting in numerous drug-related offences.

The message to those dealing drugs, and those intent on putting local people at risk using illegal e-bikes or e-scooters, across west Leicester, is simple - expect to lose your drugs and expect to lose your e-bike or e-scooter. There will be more ops of this kind across the wards in the coming weeks.

## Screen Use – Will You Get Square Eyes?

Screens are everywhere—at work, at home, and even in our pockets. But what impact is this having on our eyes?

We see more patients than ever struggling with symptoms linked to excessive screen use. Dry eyes, blurred vision, headaches and difficulty focusing are all signs of digital eye strain—a common result of prolonged time on phones, tablets, and computers.

When we focus on screens, we blink less (sometimes 60% less), which leads to dryness and discomfort. The eye muscles also get overworked from sustained close-up focusing. Add in glare, screen brightness and poor posture, and it's no surprise our eyes feel tired by the end of the day.

For children, the risks are even more significant. Excessive screen time, especially without outdoor breaks, is linked to the rise in myopia (short-sightedness). This can worsen as children grow, potentially increasing their risk of eye disease later in life.

Recommended screen time for children:

Under 2 – None.

2 to 5 Max 1 hour

6 to 12 – Max 2 hours on top of school work and with breaks

Over 13 – No limit but must not interfere with sleep



**ALAN BELLAMY**

Alan Bellamy is the senior optometrist at Bellamy Eyecare, serving Leicester and Irthlingborough communities for over 22 years.

### What can you do about it?

- Follow the **20-20-20 rule**: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Use **ocular lubricant gel** to keep the eyes moist.
- Ensure screens are positioned properly (arms length and top of screen just below eye level) and lighting is soft and indirect.
- Encourage children to put the phone down and pick up a ball. Good luck!
- Consider **custom spectacle lenses** with anti-reflective coatings. Some people find blue light filters to be more comfortable and there are specialist lenses designed for the particular focussing requirements of screen/office use.

With these few simple steps you can make screen use more comfortable.

*A sponsored article by Bellamy Eyecare*



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# BRAIN TAZERS

1		2		3		4
5						
6				7		
8						

**1 Across:** Type of red **1 Down:** Tender hugs **2D:** Titanic error **3D:** Sexton **4D:** Sewing the pine **5A:** Twist & down **6A:** An untruth **7A:** Unwell **8A** Spied on the horizon © Paul Towers 2026

**Answers at [w:westernparkgazette.co.uk](http://w:westernparkgazette.co.uk)**

7			8				
5	3			2	9		
		8	6	7	3		5
						7	6
	7	5		3		9	2
	6	4					
	5		2	9	4	6	
			3	6			4
					1		7

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